



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  ARLINGTON

Beware the Grim Reaper of Complacency

Presented by Pat Furr
Roco Safety Officer/Chief Instructor

Beware the Grim Reaper of Complacency

Presented by Pat Furr
Roco Safety Officer/Chief
Instructor



www.RocoRescue.com
800-647-7626



Introduction

- **A safe workplace is provided by addressing two main areas; working conditions and human behavior**
- **It is important to provide safe conditions –tools, environment, facilities, PPE etc.- but equally important is to address human behavior**
- **The majority of accidents are due to unsafe acts not unsafe conditions**



Introduction

Human attributes versus human behavior

- **Examples of Attributes: technical knowledge, skills, intelligence**
- **Examples of Behavior: risk taking, motivation or lack thereof, and proneness to *complacency***



Introduction

Should we expect positive behavioral change to solve all our safety deficiencies?

Must be in concert with safe work conditions

- In fact, safe working conditions are necessary to demonstrate to employees that they are being supported

Don't try to force behavior change

- Encourage, acknowledge, and support it



Overview

- **The Path to Complacency**
- **Recognizing Complacency**
- **Understanding the Consequences**
- **Tools to Combat Complacency**



The Path to Complacency

- **To *varying degrees* we are all susceptible to complacency**
- **Various personality traits can either combat or accelerate the onset of complacency**
- **External influences can accelerate or abate the onset of complacency**



The Path to Complacency

- **Personality traits that may help combat complacency**
 - **Attentive to detail/focus**
 - **Willingness to actively engage in safety culture**
 - **Optimism (w/caveat)/high expectations**
 - **Success oriented**
 - **Conscientious**



The Path to Complacency

- **Personality traits that may accelerate onset of complacency**
 - **Pessimism**
 - **Accepts failure**
 - **Impulsive**
 - **Poor attention**
 - **Contentment**
 - **Risk taker/Over-confident**
 - **Perceived safety**
 - **Would never happen to me**



The Path to Complacency

- **External influences that may affect onset of complacency**
 - **Routine task and outcome**
 - **Good habits vs. bad habits**
 - **Avoiding autopilot**
 - **Deadlines/falling behind**
 - **Lack of, or diminished job security**
 - **Absence of leadership**
 - **Observed complacency in co-workers**
 - **Distractions on and off the job**



The Path to Complacency

- **Recipe for accident is a dangerous work environment combined with complacent worker(s)**
- **Do we invest time and effort changing our worker's behavior, or do we concentrate on environmental factors?**



The Path to Complacency

- **Understanding complacency and realizing its role as a root cause in accidents is as important as understanding and addressing environmental factors.**
- **Understanding root cause has to go beyond linking cause to complacent behavior. Ask what led to that behavior?**



Recognizing Complacency

- **Defined: Self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies**
- **An emotional state where we are oblivious to danger**
- **Insidious unless you are actively guarding against it**



Recognizing Complacency

- **Early signs of complacency**
 - **Realizing you are distracted from the task at hand**
 - **Making mistakes that you would normally not make**
 - **Starting to take shortcuts**
 - **Observing complacent behavior in others and not addressing it**
 - **The “Devils Circle”**



Recognizing Complacency

- **“It only takes a moment of complacency to lead to an accident”**
- **Do you really believe that accidents occur because of an isolated moment of complacency?**
- **Or**
- **Were there opportunities to recognize and stop complacency before the accident?**



Understanding the Consequences

- **What is the nature of the hazards?**
- **Think “What if?”**
- **Study a little history**
- **Consider the domino effect**
- **Consider employee’s behavior history in HR decisions and work assignments**



Tools to Combat Complacency

- **Provide awareness training**
- **Refocusing on hazards/JSA**
 - **Employees lead the way**
- **Report all near misses/Safety Observations and learn from them**
- **Instill good habits/new habits**



Tools to Combat Complacency

- **Actively decide (avoid autopilot)**
- **Stay in the moment**
 - **This is an example of a new habit**
- **If you say to yourself “I need to remember to do this” create a reliable reminder**



Tools to Combat Complacency

- **Management Involvement – Show your face/listen/understand/respond**
- **Employee involvement**
 - **Observe peers, coach, and encourage**
 - **Feedback to management on employee concerns**
 - **Collaborate seeking solutions**
- **If possible, rotate job assignments to avoid routine**



Summary

- **Understanding complacency's role in overall safety is just one facet of a comprehensive safety program**
- **It is a big part of BBS**
- **Accepting that we are all prone to complacency is first step**
- **Recognizing, understanding the consequences, and knowing how to combat it is our goal**



Questions?

Discussion



www.RocoRescue.com
800-647-7626

